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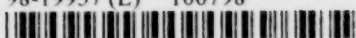
New York, 6-31 July 1998

Agenda item 13 (a)

Economic and environmental questions: sustainable development

Statement submitted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.





INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

PLACE DU PETIT-SAONNEX
1211 GENEVA 19 (SWITZERLAND)

TELEPHONE (41 22) 919 41 50 - TELEFAX (41 22) 733 31 41 - E-MAIL postbox@mail.ipu.org
TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS - INTERPARLEMENT GENEVE - TELEX 414217 IPU CH

Economic and Social Council
1998 Substantive Session
Item 13 of the provisional agenda

ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS

(a) Sustainable development

WRITTEN STATEMENT PRESENTED BY THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) submits the following declaration on Official Development Assistance (ODA) which was adopted without a vote by the Inter-Parliamentary Council* at its 162th session (Windhoek, 6 April 1998). For the IPU, sustainable development goes beyond merely linking environmental considerations to economic growth and includes such other vital issues as human development, participation in decision-making and social and economic justice. Its activities in this field are guided by its Committee for Sustainable Development which, after having held hearings on ODA at its last session in Geneva in March 1998, drafted the Declaration.

DECLARATION ON DECLINING OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE (ODA) AND FINANCIAL AID IN GENERAL

Official Development Assistance (ODA) has been declining at an alarming rate. Rather than closing the gap with the target of 0.7 per cent of Gross National Product (GNP) set by the international community as far back as 1972 and reaffirmed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992, overall ODA has fallen from an average of 0.35 percent of GNP in the early 90s to less than 0.25 per cent today. In absolute terms, ODA has decreased during the last seven years by 25 percent, falling from a high of 60 billion dollars in 1990 to 45.5 billion dollars in 1997.

* The Inter-Parliamentary Council is the plenary policy making body of the IPU, comprising representatives of the Union's 137 member parliaments.

This decrease is the result of many factors. The political commitment to aid in donor countries is being challenged by chronic fiscal pressures compounded in many countries by high rates of domestic unemployment. The end of the Cold War has done away with security and ideological justifications for aid. A perception of aid dependence among the poorest countries and growing scepticism generally of past effectiveness of aid in promoting development and reducing poverty are further additions to the list of disincentives. Changes in fundamental development theories have also played their role. The shift in beliefs from development being equated with growth and led by public sector planning efforts towards more complex, multidimensional concepts of development as being people-centred, participatory and market-driven has led to uncertainty about the most appropriate role of aid. In short, there is a crisis in confidence in the utility of aid.

The decline in ODA is cause for very serious concern. ODA is an essential source of funding for many developing countries and particularly in the area of social development cannot be replaced by private financial flows. And it is at the core of the commitments made by States at the several world conferences held this last decade addressing sustainable development. While States have agreed that funding for the implementation of *Agenda 21* and other international commitments towards sustainable development should mainly come from countries' own public and private sources, they have also reaffirmed time and again the need to mobilise and provide new and additional, adequate and predictable financial resources to meet the targets of poverty reduction, protection of the environment and economic growth.

Beyond financial concerns, decreasing ODA has serious political repercussions on the possibility to forge international consensus on sustainable development in the future and, in particular, on its environmental aspects. The Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly in June 1997 (Rio+5) to make an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of *Agenda 21* provides one example where lack of progress on financing of sustainable development had a noticeable negative effect.

Hence, the urgent need to reverse the decline in ODA. This will require pursuing strategies which aim at improving the performance of development assistance and restoring donor support for ODA. We propose that national Parliaments launch a debate in plenary on the subject of declining ODA with a view to fostering a broader public understanding and support for official development assistance and consequent government action. Such a debate should focus on the following parameters for the future direction of aid :

- (i) The development goal of Official Development Assistance, implicit in its very name but often obscured by a narrow view equating development with growth, must be reasserted. We need to repeat that the ethical case for ODA rests ultimately on aid's ability to alleviate poverty, for this and future generations. To that end, ODA must address sustainable development conceived as a broad objective based on the need to achieve - in an integrated and mutually supportive way - the triple goals of economic growth, social progress and equity, and the protection of the environment. By definition, these goals must prevail over short-term commercial or partisan motivations.

(ii) At the same time, overall effectiveness of ODA must be improved. Both donor and recipient countries need to ensure that existing ODA funding is used in the most effective and efficient way and that it contributes to economic growth, social development and environmental protection in the context of sustainable development. More effective use of ODA is essential in overcoming current donor fatigue and in promoting political support for increase of ODA levels by the governments and general public in donor countries.

(iii) To achieve these objectives, sustainable development and therefore also the use of ODA must be driven by domestic priorities. Aid projects have the best chance of succeeding when they are the result of a broadly based participatory process in which the political leadership, the agencies of the State and civil society agree on desirable policy changes and translate them into parameters of policy and administration which are generally accepted.

(iv) Similarly, development projects should be implemented in the context of sound economic, social and environmental policies. Recipient States need to develop a sound policy framework and transparent, participatory and effective national institutions. While growth is necessary for poverty reduction, it will not achieve this result unless it occurs in an environmentally sustainable manner and within an institutional and policy framework which ensures that the benefits of growth are equitably shared.

(v) Governments in both donor and recipient countries, as well as international financial institutions, need to ensure greater transparency with regard to the objectives of aid programs and the consistency of actual allocations and end uses with those objectives. Greater accountability in determining the objectives of aid and in the allocation of resources will help reduce donors' use of tied aid, and recipients' use of aid for short-term political and economic gains.

(vi) ODA should be better targeted to the least developed countries and to those sectors in developing countries and countries in transition which do not benefit from adequate funding from various private sources, both domestic and external. Such sectors where the primary goal is to achieve human development are usually in the social area, particularly education, health, and poverty eradication, as well as environmental protection in many cases.

(vii) ODA can be instrumental in covering incremental costs of national actions and policies aimed at achieving global environmental benefits, in particular actions aimed at the implementation of goals and objectives of various international conventions. Bearing in mind the overarching role played by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), governments have the responsibility to ensure the adequate replenishment of the Facility as well as to identify ways and means to improve access to its resources. Furthermore careful consideration has to be given to the scope of GEF's programme activities.

(viii) There is a need for more systematic use of donor-recipient dialogues and more effective coordination among the donors themselves in order to ensure that ODA meets national priorities and, at the same time, facilitates the achievement of specific goals agreed at the international level. There also seems to be a need to improve greater policy coordination and collaboration between bilateral and multilateral donors, including international financial institutions, and various funding and technical co-operation activities carried out by the organizations of the United Nations system, as well as by NGOs.

(ix) A most promising mechanism for donor-recipient coordination is a clear, recipient-driven strategy for sustainable development. National and sectoral sustainable development strategies can serve as the basis for designing funding programs using both domestic and international financial resources, including ODA.

(x) There is also a need to explore and foster new approaches to the uses of ODA. This includes consideration of the possibility of further shifting the ODA financing from funding specific projects towards supporting broader goals of national policy reform aimed at sustainable development, including the need for addressing possible short-term social implications of such reforms. Furthermore, there are discussions regarding the role that ODA can play as a catalyst for leveraging private investment in support of sustainable development.

(xi) Within the broad context of ODA, the problem of indebtedness of the poorest and the most indebted developing countries, must also be addressed. In addition to traditional mechanisms such as commercial bank debt buybacks and more innovative ones such as debt-for-nature swaps or debt-for-social-development swaps, particular mention should be made here of the Debt Initiative for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC), a joint World Bank and IMF initiative now being implemented.

(xii) A comprehensive policy regarding the financing of sustainable development must also address the issue of subsidies and particularly those that lead to unsustainable development. Existing subsidies will need to be made more transparent, examined in parliament, reformed, and as the case may be, removed. At the same time, support will have to be provided to the most vulnerable affected groups.

(xiii) ODA is not a form of charity. In many cases ODA provides an important long-term service for the tax payers in donor countries themselves. By addressing urgent social needs, particularly the need to eradicate poverty, ODA can play an important role in avoiding potentially dangerous social dislocation which, in turn, can lead to national and regional conflicts. ODA, as shown above, can play a crucial role in ensuring that all countries join efforts aimed at addressing global environmental problems which, otherwise, can not be effectively dealt with by developed countries acting alone.



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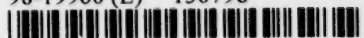
New York, 6-31 July 1998

Agenda item 14 (a)

Social and human rights questions: advancement of women

Statement submitted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.





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SOCIAL QUESTIONS AND QUESTIONS RELATING TO HUMAN RIGHTS

(a) Status of Women

WRITTEN STATEMENT PRESENTED BY THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) welcomes the concern of the United Nations to strengthen its interaction with civil society. It points out that, at the level of the State, Parliament is the institution through which the concerns and aspirations of civil society are relayed. It is through Parliaments that the hopes of society are expressed in all their diversity and where they are channelled and transformed into the collective will. Parliaments are also, both as an institution and through the individual action of their members, the channel through which the norms and recommendations adopted by Governments in the United Nations are relayed to the people.

The social dynamics mirrored in Parliaments are today deeply marked by the change in the traditional balance of the division of labour between men and women. To varying degrees and in different ways, this transformation is taking place throughout the world, regardless of the level of economic or cultural development. This process is the fruit of the on-going profound transformations in economy, information technology and spiritual values but it is also the outcome of decades of work by the United Nations and a multitude of other organisations, including the IPU, to put an end to the whole range of discriminatory practices which affect women and which have resulted in serious imbalances in all walks of life.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union does not study the question of the status of women separately but from the perspective of the development of partnership between men and women. As a political organisation, it gives special attention to women's participation in political life. Its action aims to strengthen the foundations of democracy and is inspired by the following principle set out in the *Universal Declaration on Democracy* (1997)¹: « *The achievement of democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society in which they work in equality and complementarity, drawing mutual enrichment from their differences* ».

Meeting in Windhoek in April 1998 at the invitation of the Parliament of Namibia, the Inter-Parliamentary Council (the plenary governing body of the IPU²) undertook to study the means to support United Nations action concerning women. In the spirit of the Agreement of Co-operation signed between the IPU and the UN in 1996, it took the following measures aimed at strengthening

¹ The Declaration appears in « *Democracy - Its Principles and Achievement* », Inter-Parliamentary Union, 1998.

² The Council is composed of two representatives from each of the 137 Parliaments members of the Union

the synergy between the two Organisations in order to give effect to the « *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* » and « *The Beijing Platform for Action* » and at encouraging Parliaments to exert greater influence for the national implementation of these texts.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

The Inter-Parliamentary Council noted that the ratification of treaties implies a number of obligations for States parties, in particular, that of harmonising national law with the treaty provisions and reporting periodically to a competent body on national measures to follow up those provisions. With regard to CEDAW, the Council noted that Article 18 lays down that States must submit periodic reports on « *the legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures which they have adopted to give effect to the provisions of the Convention and on the progress made in this respect* ».

Of the 161 States parties to CEDAW in April 1998, 56 had never submitted a preliminary report on the follow-up action they had taken, and some 30 States were very late in submitting subsequent periodic reports. Therefore, the Inter-Parliamentary Council called on members of the Parliaments of the States concerned to enquire about the reason for this delay and to encourage their Governments to submit detailed and complete reports as soon as possible that comply with the standards laid down by the CEDAW Committee.

Moreover, considering that the reservations expressed by many States when acceding to CEDAW weaken the scope of the Convention, the Inter-Parliamentary Council called on members of the Parliaments of the States concerned to enquire about the validity of such reservations with a view to their being lifted if possible. It recalled that in 1993 it had stressed that « *Parliaments should be more diligent in ensuring that the Executive submits to the international treaty bodies the requisite reports, including references to the work and observations of MPs. If Parliaments are not consulted when these reports are drawn up, they should receive them for information, together with the opinions, decisions or recommendations of the committees to which they were submitted.* »

Beijing Platform for Action

The IPU considers that the commitments entered into by Governments at Conferences such as the Fourth World Conference on Women are commitments of the State. It points out that the legislative branch of the State, the Parliament, is a key actor whose intervention is required to obtain the enabling legislation and also the budget needed for the implementation of the plans established by administrations to give effect to international agreements.

For this reason, the IPU participated in the preparatory process of the Beijing Conference and encouraged a strong parliamentary contribution to it. It thus made various contributions to the Conference, including the adoption of a « *Plan of Action to correct present imbalances in the participation of men and women in political life* », a document that is related to the part of the Platform for Action concerning decision-making.

Since 1995, the IPU has constantly worked to follow up the Beijing Conference. Noting that national follow-up of its own Plan of Action and of the Beijing Platform for Action will both be assessed in 2000, the Inter-Parliamentary Council has wished to strengthen the synergy between the action of the two Organisations. To that end, it has proposed the following measures:

1. Co-ordination regarding the collection of data on the implementation of the two above-mentioned documents (Beijing Platform for Action and IPU Plan of Action) and regarding the reports on national action which will be submitted in 2000 to the Special Session of the UN General Assembly on the one hand, and to the Inter-Parliamentary Council on the other;
2. Contribution of the IPU to the preparatory process of the Special Session of the UN General Assembly and participation of a parity delegation of the IPU (two persons) in the Session;
3. Inclusion of MPs in national delegations to the Special Session of the General Assembly;
4. Holding of a UN/IPU joint meeting on the occasion of the Special Session of the General Assembly, on the theme « *Democracy through partnership between men and women in politics* » in which government and parliamentary representatives will participate, together with representatives of the international organisations concerned;
5. Providing the United Nations (which is due to produce statistics and indicators on the situation of women in the world) with statistical and other data concerning women's participation in political life;
6. Co-ordination regarding follow-up to recommendations emerging from the General Assembly and the Inter-Parliamentary Council in 2000.



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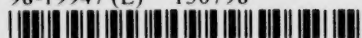
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Agenda item 14 (b)

Social and human rights questions: social development

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SOCIAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS **(b) Social development**

Written statement presented by the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Parliamentary contribution to the assessment of progress on social development issues since the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD)

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) believes that, whereas economic policy and the issues of globalisation and trade liberalisation are high on the agenda of governments, social development receives much less attention. This led the Inter-Parliamentary Council* to adopt at its 162nd session (Windhoek, Namibia, 6 April 1998) a political declaration on the need to give substance to the social development commitments undertaken at the Copenhagen Summit (see text in the Annex).

In addition to adopting a political declaration, the Inter-Parliamentary Council thought it necessary for the IPU to contribute to efforts of evaluating the progress made with regard to social development since the Copenhagen Summit. The Council decided that the best way of associating parliaments with this global review would be to address a questionnaire to all IPU member parliaments on parliamentary action since 1995 to give practical effect to the recommendations of the Summit. The replies to such a questionnaire and their analysis would provide the Union's input for the work of the UN Commission on Social Development at its 1999 session.

Furthermore, the Council launched a proposal that a new tripartite meeting of parliamentarians, representatives of governments and representatives of intergovernmental organisations be held in 1999 with focus on the implementation of the results of the WSSD (the first such meeting was held at the UN Headquarters in New York in September 1996). This issue would also be the subject for debate at one of the Union's statutory meetings in 1999. The Inter-Parliamentary Union intends to be present at the various preparatory

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meetings for the Special session of the UN General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development.

Finally, the Council was of the view that it could greatly benefit from the results of « social audits » of a representative selection of countries which would indicate the level of implementation of the results of the Copenhagen Summit. To this end, the Council instructed the Union's Secretariat to explore the possibility of obtaining such audits from competent international organisations, such as the World Bank.

**DECLARATION ON THE FOLLOW-UP
OF THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

*Adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Council at its 162nd session
(Windhoek, Namibia, 6 April 1998)*

While the economic agenda of governments is proceeding at a fast pace,

While globalisation, investment rules, corporate profits and subsidies, formation of trade blocs, efficiency goals, etc., are given high priority and enjoy unprecedented attention and consideration,

The world's social agenda is lagging behind because of lack of political will and the misplaced belief that economic progress can be disconnected from social progress.

At the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD), commitments were made by governments on behalf of each State. Therefore, the fulfilment of these commitments calls for the involvement of all the branches of the State, including Parliament whose fundamental role is to represent and express the will of the people.

Three years have passed since the World Summit. The time has now come for governments to implement their commitments and to give an account to the people for any failure to do so.

The IPU urges governments which participated in the WSSD in Copenhagen to give proof of their political will, confirm progress and implement the recommendations awaiting action, as contained in the 1995 report of the World Summit for Social Development.



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Social and human rights questions: human rights

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SOCIAL QUESTIONS AND QUESTIONS RELATING TO HUMAN RIGHTS

(g) Human Rights

Written statement presented by the Inter-Parliamentary Union

1998 - International human rights year

Fifty years ago, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which has become the touchstone of international human rights law and the basis on which human rights conventions, in particular the two international human rights covenants, were elaborated. 1998 also marks the first five-year review of the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993.

However, the goals set forth in the Declaration half a century ago are nonetheless still distant since human rights standards are not fully and universally respected and human rights and fundamental freedoms continue to be violated in all parts of the world.

Parliaments and their members, as the legitimate representatives of civil society, are uniquely placed to ensure that concrete measures are taken to make the start of the next millennium a period of more effective progress towards the enjoyment by peoples all over the world of the entire spectrum of civil, political, economic, social and cultural human rights, as enshrined in the International Bill of Human Rights.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has continuously stressed that parliamentary activity as a whole, which covers the entire spectrum of human rights, aims at guaranteeing human rights and fundamental freedoms: Parliament's role is to enshrine human rights and fundamental freedoms adequately in national law and to ensure that the standard it approves is given substance in the corresponding enabling legislation and judicial and administrative practice. In carrying out its essential function of overseeing the action of the Executive branch, Parliament has a broad range of means at its disposal to ensure that human rights obligations are respected and complied with by the competent State authorities. Lastly, Parliament is the State body which adopts the national budget and can thus steer funds towards sectors of primary impact as regards the enjoyment by everybody of human rights by all.

Aware of the particular duty of Parliaments and their members as guardians of human rights, and considering the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as an opportunity for parliaments to ensure that progress towards better implementation of human rights is made, the IPU, at its 98th statutory Conference (Cairo, September 1997) called on all Parliaments and their members to take action at the national level to ensure:

- (i) That international and regional human rights treaties are ratified or acceded to promptly by their countries, in case they have not already done so, and that reservations are withdrawn whenever they conflict with the object and purpose of the treaty;
- (ii) That enabling legislation is enacted and that the provisions of national laws and regulations are harmonised with the norms and standards contained in these instruments with a view to their full implementation;
- (iii) That full co-operation and adequate information is offered to international and regional human rights bodies, including international criminal courts, and that individual complaints procedures provided for in international human rights treaties are accepted;
- (iv) That independent national institutions for human rights, including the office of an Ombudsman or equivalent institution, together with parliamentary bodies overseeing human rights issues, are established or activated to operate in keeping with human rights norms;
- (v) That non-governmental organisations working for the promotion and protection of human rights receive the necessary support and protection;
- (vi) That the necessary budgetary provisions are made for action to promote and protect human rights, with special reference to human rights education;
- (vii) That support and co-operation is extended at the international level to the work of the United Nations and, in particular the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights, as well as to regional human rights bodies.

Member parliaments were urged to present reports - at the 100th statutory Conference (Moscow, 6 - 11 September 1998) - on the action they have taken to put into practice these recommendations. National follow-up action will be one of the main issues to be discussed under the following item placed on the agenda of the Moscow Conference: « *Strong action by national parliaments in the year of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to ensure the promotion and protection of all human rights in the 21st century* ».

One of the means of public scrutiny of a government's effort to promote and protect human rights around the world is the establishment of parliamentary human rights bodies. In 1990, the IPU published the first edition of its « *World Directory on Parliamentary Human Rights Bodies* » with the purpose of providing information on the composition, mandate and functioning of such bodies wherever they exist and to facilitate contacts among them. The Directory has become a widely appreciated reference tool and the IPU consequently decided that the year of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was appropriate to renew it. The new edition, which is currently under preparation on the basis of the replies received from member parliaments to a questionnaire, will be published in autumn 1998.

Efforts to advance international standards regarding human rights and democracy

In the past 10 years, human rights issues have been debated at virtually all IPU statutory conferences held twice annually, resulting in recommendations for specific action by governments and parliaments to uphold and promote human rights. On these occasions, the Union has consistently affirmed its conviction that human rights are universal in scope and that respect for them is an essential factor of justice and development, security and peace. It has also consistently emphasised the indivisible nature of civil and political rights and of economic, social and cultural rights, and expressed its conviction that human rights and fundamental freedoms are a matter of international concern since respect for them constitutes a pillar of international order. Finally, the

Union has placed emphasis on the indissoluble link between respect for human rights, democracy and development.

Most importantly, striving to promote democracy and the establishment of pluralistic systems of representative government in the world, the Inter-Parliamentary Union adopted in September 1997 the « *Universal Declaration on Democracy* », setting out the thinking of the international parliamentary community on the principles of democracy, the elements and exercise of democratic government and the international dimension of democracy. The Declaration, of which the United Nations General Assembly took note in resolution N° 52/18, clearly states that democracy is inseparable from the rights set forth in the major international human rights instruments and is founded on the primacy of law and the exercise of human rights. It affirms that it is an essential function of the State to ensure the enjoyment of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights for its citizens. The Declaration further states that democracy must also be recognised as an international principle, applicable to international organisations and to States in their international relations. The Declaration was the fruit of a process which started in December 1996 when the IPU had gathered together, with the support of UNESCO, a panel of experts representing all the world's geographic regions and socio-political trends who subsequently presented in writing their views on the major issues at stake in the field of democracy. These texts have been finalised and compiled in a publication entitled « *Democracy: its Principles and Achievement* » which was published in February 1998.

The defence of the human rights of parliamentarians

In order for parliamentarians to protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms in their respective countries, it is necessary that they themselves can fully exercise their human rights. In addition, the representative nature of a Parliament closely depends on the respect of the rights of the member of that Parliament. Basing itself on this concept, the IPU established in 1976 a « *Procedure for the examination and treatment of communications concerning violations of the human rights of parliamentarians* ». The Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, a body composed of five parliamentarians representing the major geopolitical regions, was set up to implement the procedure and investigate relevant complaints by means of a procedure based on the principles of dialogue and co-operation with the authorities of the countries concerned. A just completed substantive statistical analysis of the work it has accomplished since its inception in 1977 not only shows that the number of cases brought before it continuously grows but also reveals some evolution in the nature of violations of the human rights of MPs over the years. While in the early times it dealt with a great number of cases involving disappearances, extrajudicial executions administrative detention or imprisonment without trial, the Committee is now confronted with a proportionally greater number of cases of MPs who are either imprisoned after questionable prosecution and trials that have the appearance of legality or who are the subject of various kinds of harassment or infringements against the free exercise of their parliamentary mandate, that is to say the free exercise of their right to freedom of speech which the IPU considers to be central to the functioning of parliamentary democracy: parliamentary democracy presupposes that parliamentarians are free to report or denounce a possible malfunction of State bodies as in so doing they are simply fulfilling their constitutional oversight function.



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Economic and environmental questions

Statement submitted by the International Multiracial Shared Cultural Organization, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.



The new Africa that's saying no to harmful policies

1. The International Multiracial Shared Cultural Organization (IMSCO), on behalf of Africans in Africa and Africans in the Diaspora, two linked communities and natural trading partners, file these grievances and make the following suggestions for immediate changes in the way the United Nations Members, organs, donors and foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs) function in African development affairs.

African grievances

2. United Nations policies do not promote economic and social (cultural) links with Africans through Africans or African business culture and institutions around the world. Africans, like Europeans and Asians, are natural trading partners, but they are denied the equal treatment and cooperation provided non-Africans. As a matter of policy, African NGOs are locked out of major funding by the United Nations and international donor institutions and agencies.

3. IMSCO, an African managed and operated NGO in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, which was established to promote and help implement a business culture and social development and to help manage indigenous people by linking land, wealth and private business rights and affairs, does not receive cooperation from United Nations funding agencies when requested.

4. IMSCO calls on the United Nations and its Member States to stop promoting and funding the privatization of land and minerals and foreign businesses in Africa until full acknowledgement of the ownership rights and human rights of indigenous Africans in Africa and Africans in the Diaspora has been assured.

5. IMSCO calls the attention of the United Nations and all concerned to the recent decision by the Government and people of Zimbabwe to nationalize half the country's commercial farmland in 1997 to correct past crimes against Africans. This is a clear example of what Africa and the world will be faced with as a globally dispersed African community demands the return of all ancestral homelands, intellectual property, stolen art (e.g. the Rosetta Stone), mineral wealth, business culture, jobs and contracts needed to realize international business opportunities.

6. The constant change of direction by the United Nations and donors, the lack of African vision and loss of taxpayer dollars add to the problem facing African development

efforts worldwide. This supports the African people's claim that the global African community's right to link and co-develop has been stolen by self-serving people and agencies within and outside the United Nations system. To this end, support for IMSCO aims within the United Nations system since it gained consultative status in 1995 has been hard to find or non-existent.

7. Repeated requests by IMSCO on behalf of its members and supporters to be involved in ongoing projects from the Secretary-General's office to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are depreciated and have been unsuccessful.

8. IMSCO is concerned to find the African private sector (NGOs) in the field throughout Africa and the African Diaspora often complaining of trying to build and link an African culture while being sabotaged and dictated to by rude foreigners in control of funding, projects and institutions designed more to enrich foreign aid workers and self-serving donors who often prevent Africans from reaching sustainable co-development. (For reference, see Graham Hancock, *Lords of Poverty*, (New York, The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1989)).

9. IMSCO and its supporters call upon the United Nations, its Members and special organs to expand development activities to include Africans living in the Diaspora (African-Americans) as matter of human rights. If the United Nations Member States do not include the African Diaspora in all areas of social, economic and political development when planning and budgeting, sustainable solutions will only end in conflict and failure. As in any developed foreign community, the linking Diaspora family, in this case African-Americans, can be the most reliable and dependable trading partner and political ally.

10. IMSCO members feel certain that the United Nations itself is not the overall problem; thus IMSCO requested NGO consultative status, supported by the United States of America in the Economic and Social Council in 1995. However, thousands of published pages of independent research (e.g. *Lords of Poverty*) do suggest that African private sector aims and objectives are being misguided and funds are being directed away from the intended purposes by non-African donors, agencies, managers and directors. This leaves IMSCO members agreeing with the United States of America and other United Nations Member States that the policies at the United Nations are not working for the good of the people who need them the most. Therefore funding should be withheld. IMSCO feels it is correct to say that some United Nations agencies and foreign NGOs contracted to carry out development policies and projects for

African people often sabotage African development for their own interests and economic gain. History suggests that only a member of the culture being developed can grow and advance that culture.

Solutions

11. On behalf of all Africans struggling to resettle in their homeland and to develop and link an African business culture, IMSCO strongly urges the United Nations to take immediate action to resolve the problems described above and suggests the following solutions:

(a) That an IMSCO business-culture development consultant mandated by the Economic and Social Council be included in any and all budgets and projects involving African social and economic development in order to ensure fairness and linkage with the global African community; that Africans in Africa and Africans in the Diaspora be hired and contracted before non-Africans on all projects involving African development (example: after the Second World War, in Japan, India and Europe, no African was shipped in to develop Japanese, Indian or European business culture);

(b) That the human rights of all African people be honoured when the question of land resettlement and ownership is addressed;

(c) That the United Nations, its Member States and donors withhold funding from any and all Governments, agencies, persons and institutions that do not comply with the request of African people to develop their own culture linked to Africans in the Diaspora;

(d) That the United Nations grant African private sector companies and NGOs the same economic, industrial and technological contributions it grants non-Africans;

(e) That the United Nations, its Members and organizations support IMSCO with the proper budget to strengthen its mandate and enable IMSCO to contact and assist African NGOs indigenous to Africa and the African Diaspora to obtain consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.

Conclusion

12. As a global people's NGO whose aims are social and economic and whose members specialize in all areas of development, IMSCO sees no reason why in 1998 most developing communities and people need to have foreigners dictate to them on how to grow an indigenous culture or to

link with natural trading partners in the Diaspora. IMSCO members and supporters feel it is time for African people to take charge of their own development. IMSCO would like to remind the United Nations and the world that the people in the Republic of China are no worse off for taking their destiny into their own hands, and as a result, China today is a major success story.

Future outlook

13. Failure to include direct economic support to Africa through a business culture and institutions managed by Africans in Africa and the Diaspora and designed to achieve self-determination in all areas of development will increase instability between Africans and non-Africans throughout the world, possibly leading Africa to close many of its doors to non-allies, just as the Republic of China did successfully.

14. IMSCO looks forward to your cooperation.



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Social and human rights questions: advancement of women and human rights

Statement submitted by the World Veterans Federation, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.



The World Veterans Federation (WVF), founded in 1950 by war veterans and war victims, today has over 27 million members located in 74 countries in every continent. Recognizing that war and armed conflicts can affect women differently from men and may require different responses, WVF in 1984 created a Standing Committee on Women to address the issues regarding women and children in armed conflicts. From that time, WVF has participated actively in all the key United Nations conferences and policy initiatives that advance the status of women worldwide.

WVF has worked closely with the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat in the preparations for the Beijing Conference and provided considerable input to the drafting of the Beijing Platform for Action in the critical areas in which it has special expertise. This year WVF contributed substantially to the work of the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-second session, when it covered the focal points human rights of women, violence against women, women and armed conflict and the girl child. WVF suggested that especially the first three – although in many cases all four – of the focal points are intertwined. Violence against women, which is prevalent in armed conflicts, certainly violates the human rights of women. Girl children are especially vulnerable to this violence.

Reviewing “women and armed conflict”, the numbers of women and children casualties of armed conflicts in today’s wars are much greater than in earlier wars; in fact, they outnumber those of combatants. They include the war disabled, mine victims, refugees and the internally displaced, widows and orphans, unaccompanied children, wives of the disabled, internees of concentration and labour camps and raped, sexually abused and exploited women.

Recent violence, including ethnic cleansing against civilians in the armed conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, has turned international attention to the horrors perpetrated against women in internal conflicts. Unlike the Nuremberg or Tokyo war crimes, rape is on the docket of the ad hoc international tribunals at The Hague and Arusha. For the first time, sexual violence against women during armed conflicts will be prosecuted. The International Criminal Court that came into being at the United Nations Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries in Rome, which recognized crimes of sexual violence, will serve as a deterrent for future violence.

WVF wishes to call attention to a gender-related human rights catastrophe dating back to the Second World War, which has never been resolved – that of the rape and forced sexual slavery of the 200,000 or more “comfort

women” from the countries of Asia that were overrun by the warring Japanese Imperial Army bent on conquest and subjugation. Many of the women died from the harsh treatment; those who survived were so physically and psychologically scarred that they were never able to lead normal lives. Many never married; many could not have children. Terribly shamed by their experiences, the “comfort women” remained silent for years. Finally, some historians came across references to such events and, in 1992, one of the “comfort women” spoke out. Various human rights and legal groups in the Republic of Korea, Japan and other countries unearthed more information and became strong advocates for the women.

The Special Rapporteur appointed by the United Nations Committee on Human Rights several years ago investigated the reports that had begun to surface and verified the monstrosity of the crimes committed against these innocent women, many of whom were still girls as young as 13 years of age. What the Special Rapporteur found was that the Government of Japan itself had created and administered the “comfort stations” and organized the kidnapping and abduction of the women. The report of the Special Rapporteur concluded that the Government of Japan had both a legal and moral obligation towards the women kept in forced military sexual slavery. To date neither an official apology nor reparations have been forthcoming from that Government.

At its twenty-second General Assembly, in November 1997, the World Veterans Federation passed a resolution on the “Human rights of women in war time”, which spoke out forcefully on behalf of the “comfort women”:

“Condemning all violations of the human rights of women in situations of armed conflict,

“Noting that the women in question are getting older and have serious medical and financial problems, and that furthermore, many are dying,

“Strongly urges the authorities involved to urgently pursue their action with a view to fully meeting these expectations,

“Expresses the hope that in the near future all the countries in the world will have to participate and seek proper and effective responses through the United Nations and specialized agencies and the international non-governmental organizations concerned to eliminate the violation of the rights of women in war time, emphasizing the need for appropriate systems and special compensation for the victims ...”.

Another resolution passed by the WVF General Assembly entitled "Victims of war and human rights" observed with satisfaction that "women in armed conflicts" would be one of the four themes to be focused on at the 1998 meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women, and supported the Optional Protocol to the important human rights instrument, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which would allow individuals and groups the right to petition, thereby enhancing the protection of the human rights of women.

In another resolution on "Children in armed conflicts", the WVF noted "that the United Nations report on the impact of armed conflict on children (the Machel Report (A/51/306)) gives full details of the abuse and exploitation of millions of children during armed conflicts today and that they represent half of the new civilian victims of war, who suffer devastating, long-lasting possible lifetime effects of those war experiences ...". The resolution also noted "that the report reveals the widespread forced recruitment of children under the age of 18, mostly boys but including some girls, into military service which often results in these children actually taking part in the fighting and sometimes in atrocities". Member associations of the Federation were asked "to urge their governments to sign the Convention on the Rights of the Child and also to support the Optional Protocol which would change the minimum age for military service to 18".

Based on its long-standing commitment to improving the status and situation of women and its support for the work of the United Nations world conferences on women, the World Veterans Federation supports the conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women on critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action.¹ WVF especially calls attention to the section on "Women and armed conflict". WVF is gratified that the Commission called upon Governments, non-governmental organizations and the public and private sectors, to take actions that "support the work of non-governmental organizations in their activities to prevent, combat and eliminate violence against women".²

Referring to the report on the follow-up and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (E/1998/53), WVF applauds the report of the Commission on the Status of Women's work in 1998, detailed in section II. WVF is especially pleased with paragraph 25, which calls upon Governments to "provide accessible and gender-sensitive avenues of redress for victims of armed conflict through legal drafting, as well as interpretation of existing international and domestic legal provisions which apply in situations of armed conflict,

including in the context of the International Criminal Court. Rape, systematic rape and sexual slavery in armed conflict should be reaffirmed as constituting war crimes, and existing legal standards and definitions should be modified to reflect that understanding".

WVF urges the Economic and Social Council to adopt the conclusions and recommendations included in the reports mentioned above.

Notes

¹ E/1998/27, chap. I, draft resolution IV.

² Ibid., sect. I.B.